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ON THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE GOSPEL OF PETER

BY

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1. Introduction

The Gospel of Peter (henceforth: GP) has provoked at least three stages of debate. The first stage began when Serapion (bishop of Antioch, AD 190-210; see Eusebius, *HE*.V.22; V. 19.1-4) came across a copy of GP in Rhossus. He initially supposed it to be orthodox, but later, on hearing that the church there had turned to heterodox teachings under the leadership of one Marcianus, investigated it more thoroughly. In this investigation he was aided by some members of the docetic group who had studied the gospel and found 'that the most part indeed was in accordance with the true teaching of the saviour, but that some things were added' (Eus, *HE* VI.12.6). He published his findings in a work entitled Περὶ τοῦ λεγομένου κατὰ Πέτρον εὐαγγελίου (see Eus, *HE*. VI. 12). A gospel attributed to Peter was known by various early Fathers,[1] but survives now in two incomplete manuscripts.[2]

The second stage of the debate occured in the decade or so after the discovery of one of those manuscripts (of the seventh or eight century) in the grave of a Christian monk (in Akhmîm, Egypt, 1886/7).[3] The narrator of this account of the passion and resurrection identified himself as Peter (GP 26 & 60), and retold the story with what was perceived by most scholars as a docetic tendency. After many publications the consensus emerged that the Akhmîm document was indeed that which Serapion had discussed, and that it was docetic, and that it was a second century document dependent on the canonical gospels.[4]

Recent years have seen a third stage of debate and interest in GP. This has focussed on the same questions that earlier studies had addressed: how docetic is GP?[5] Is it dependent on the canonical Gospels, or may it be earlier?[6] How should we describe the milieu from which GP originated: was it gnostic, or was it Jewish-Christian apocalypticism?[7]

On the second issue (is GP dependent upon the canonical gospels?) most of the arguments have concerned the phenomena of passages held in common with the canonical gospels and debate continues on the

implications of these parallels.[8] On the first issue (is GP docetic?) most of the arguments have focussed on two passages in GP (i.e. vv10 & 19). In this article we hope to address both issues by taking a wider look at the Christology of GP, especially in light of parallels in other Christian and Jewish literature (which will contribute to an understanding of the third question mentioned above). McCant complains that 'so much has been made of the alleged docetic Christology in GP that it is surprising in the extreme to find so little said of other christological data in the fragment.'[9] In what follows we shall attempt to take account of all the available "christological data" in order to assess the Christology of GP, and to "locate" GP within early Christianity.

2. The Contents of GP

GP broadly follows the canonical order in its presentation of the events of the passion of Jesus, with one or two exceptions (for example Joseph's request for the body, v3, is placed before the crucifixion). The mocking of Jesus—including elements paralleling the canonical gospels such as the purple robe, the crown of thorns, the spitting and scourging (vv6-9)—follows the judgement.[10] Then follows the crucifixion, which again contains many parallels to canonical material—the two other victims, the title, the division of the garments (vv10-14). The death of Jesus on the cross (vv15-20), although framed differently from the canonical gospels, follows their order with darkness, the drink, the cry from the cross and the tearing of the veil.

Between the death of Jesus (v19) and the arrival of the women at the tomb early on the morning of the resurrection (v50), GP contains a large amount of unique material. This new material is situated in a framework which parallels the canonical accounts: the earthquake (GP 21 cf., only Matt 27.51,54); the burial of Jesus (GP 23f cf., Matt 27.59f // Mark 15.45f// Luke 23.53); the appointment of a guard for the tomb (GP 28-34 cf., only Matt 27.62-66). Into this framework the new material includes the withdrawal of the nails and laying of the body on the ground as a prelude to the earthquake (v21); the repentance of the Jews (vv25-27); the appearance of the angels (and associated apocalyptic imagery) (vv35f); the rolling away of the stone (v37); the angels supporting Jesus (vv39f), the voice from heaven (v41), the cross—walking (v40) and talking (v42); and the discussions between Pilate and the soldiers (vv45-49).

3. Christological Titles in GP

Notable is the complete absence of 'Jesus' and 'Christ' from the narrative. The standard narrative designation is ὁ κύριος (GP 2, 3 [bis], 6, 8, 10, 19, 21, 24, 50 [bis], 59, 60). Of particular interest is the reference in v3 to τὸ σῶμα τοῦ κυρίου, since the canonical parallels all refer to 'the body of Jesus' (Mt 27.58; Mk 15.43; Lk 23.52; Jn 19.38). In the Akhmîm fragment the use of κύριος forms a consistent pattern.[11] The significance attributed by GP to 'Lord' is impossible to determine (since we have no way of assessing its original use in the document). It is used in the initial stages of the Lord's punishments, of the crucified Lord, the dead Lord, and the body of the Lord. Interestingly, in the text as we have it, κύριος never applies to the resurrected one. The four occurrences after the resurrection all refer to the pre-resurrected one (v50: 'a woman disciple of the Lord' ... 'the sepulchre of the Lord'; v59: 'the twelve disciples of the Lord'; and v60: 'Levi ... whom the Lord [had called]').

Another prominent title is 'the Son of God' (GP 6, 9, 45, 46). Each time it is used by one of the participants in the story (the first two by the people, the third by the centurions and the fourth by Pilate). In contrast with both Mark and Matthew there is no climatic use of the term (see Matt 27.54; Mark 15.39). In v45 it is Pilate alone who hears the announcement. Another title used is σωτήρ (v13): 'this man, who has become the saviour of men, what wrong has he done?' Jesus is also described as 'the king of Israel' (vv7,10).[12]

The predominance of κύριος and the use of σωτήρ might reflect a later date when the use of κύριος as a narrative designation became more common in narratives about Jesus (e.g. the known fragments of the Gospel of the Nazareans use "Lord" 7 times and "Jesus" only once;[13] and both the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Egyptians use "Lord" exclusively[14]). This is not, however, evidence of radical discontinuity with the canonical material in the use of christological titles (since we find such titles in Luke and John).

4. Silence and Painlessness in Suffering

> *'And they brought two malefactors and crucified the Lord in the midst between them. But he held his peace as if he felt no pain* (αὐτὸς δὲ ἐσιώπα ὡς μηδένα πόνον ἔχων).' GP 10.

The phrase ὡς μηδένα πόνον ἔχων is for many scholars the linchpin for a theory of GP's docetism.[15] The problem has always been that this does not seem to cohere with the evidence of the rest of the document which clearly records the death of the Lord, and implies his suffering (vv13f).[16] In GP the silence of Jesus appears at the crucifixion rather than during the trial narratives as in the synoptics. Crossan suggested that this is due to the influence of Is 53.7 on the passion account.[17] It is important to note, however, that in GP the silence of Jesus is closely connected with his apparent freedom from pain.

Concerning this freedom (or apparent freedom) from pain, there are several difficulties. The question of the meaning of ὡς cannot be settled on purely grammatical grounds. Is it causal, that is, supplying the reason why the Lord was silent, as in Swete's translation: 'He held his peace, as in no wise suffering pain'?[18] Or is it more illustrative: 'as if he felt no pain'?[19] If the latter is correct the author would not have intended to suggest that Jesus was free from pain. Similar statements in later Christian writers suggest that there is more at issue than simple docetism.[20] Apparently, one could speculate about the nature of Jesus' suffering without being "docetic".

The key elements of the account in GP are Jesus' silence, and painlessness (even if only apparent) in the face of suffering. It is notable that reports of early Christian martyrdoms regularly feature exactly the same elements: silence, insensitivity to pain, and an imitation of the death of Jesus. The Jewish martyr-reports, particularly 4 Maccabees, which form the background, characteristically emphasize the first two,[21] and Ignatius develops the idea of martyrdom as *imitatio Christi* (*Rom.* 6.3 cf., *Magn.* 5.2).[22] Subsequent Christian *Märtyrerberichte* develop the idea of martyrdom as imitation of Christ by drawing clear parallels between the martyrdoms and the passion narratives.

The clearest and best-known example of this is *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*. The introduction states: "nearly all the foregoing events came to pass that the Lord might show us once more an example of martyrdom which is conformable to the Gospel (τὸ κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον μαρτύριον)." (*MPol.* 1, cf. 19). The general principle of a martyrdom κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον is applied throughout the letter to various specifics. The police chief is named Herod, and the betrayers are likened to Judas, while Polycarp becomes Χριστοῦ κοινωνός (a partaker with Christ) (*MPol.* 6). Polycarp predicts his own demise three days before it occurs (*MPol.* 5 cf., Matt 26.2), while he is praying in a place of withdrawal,

not far distant from the city (*MPol.* 5). Polycarp waited ('even as the Lord did' *MPol.* 1, 7) to be betrayed, when he could have escaped. They came against him 'as against a robber' (*MPol.* 7 cf., Matt 26.55), and he goes with them with the words 'The will of God be done' (*MPol.* 7 cf., Matt 26.42); he is lead away at night time (*MPol.* 7), and taken on an ass (*MPol.* 8) to Herod for questioning. Other points of similarity can be found in the use of days of the week (*MPol.* 7: Friday, *MPol.* 8, 21: Sabbath); the voice from heaven (*MPol.* 9 cf., John 12.28), the piercing of the side (*MPol.* 16 cf., John 19.34), and the reference to the 'cup' (*MPol.* 14).[23]

While *MPol* is the clearest example of the presentation of martyrdom as imitation of Christ, it is by no means the only such example. Other *Märtyrerberichte* also contain examples of the same tendency (presumably under the influence of Ignatius), by making explicit parallels to events in Jesus' passion.[24] In addition, the other themes of painlessness and silence are repeatedly emphasized.[25] Two close parallels with GP occur in this literature. Firstly, Polycarp, when taken to trial, bruised his shin, but continued on his way 'as if nothing had happened to him' (ὡς οὐδὲν πεπονθώς *MPol.* 8). Secondly, Blandina, who during her martyrdom was tossed about by a bull, had 'no more feeling for what happened to her' (μηδὲ αἴσθησιν ἔτι τῶν συμβαινόντων ἔχουσα Eusebius, *HE.* V.1.56).

Frend argues that these martyr reports presuppose 'a deep and longstanding tradition of christian thought'.[26] There is evidence to suggest that this 'Christology of martyrdom'[27] was widespread among Christians in the second century.[28] In other words, we have a widespread genre in which insensitivity to pain and silent acceptance of real suffering can be juxtaposed, in reports which use Jesus' death as the basic paradigm.[29] If reports of martyrdoms could be shaped by the paradigm of Jesus' passion,[30] it is not difficult to assume that the accounts of Jesus' death could be shaped by the martyr theology. This would explain the juxtaposition of pain, silence, and suffering in the passion narrative of GP.[31] The advantage of this suggestion is that it accounts for the *whole* presentation of GP (silence, painlessness, suffering and death) in a way that other suggestions do not. In addition it does so on the basis of a widespread tendency in the second century.

5. GP 19: a crux interpretum

GP 19a: ἡ δύναμίς μου, ἡ δύναμις, κατέλειψάς με

This cry from the cross occurs in the equivalent place as the synoptic equivalent. The form of the saying in GP is, however, different: a) Θεός is replaced by δύναμις; b) the second μου is omitted; and c) the closing statement is rendered in the indicative rather than interrogative. Many have interpreted this as a docetic version of the cry of dereliction which results from the departure of the divine power from Jesus' bodily shell.[32] It must be said, however, that the language here is quite different from that of 'classical gnosticism' associated with Basilides,[33] or the Ophites.[34] The only real parallel is found among the Valentinian gnostics: Clement speaks of a Valentinian system in which it is said that when Jesus died 'the Saviour sent forth the ray of power which had come upon him and destroyed death' (*Theod.* 61.7). Even here we must note that GP does not recount a narrative of the abandoning of Jesus by "Power", but gives a version of Jesus' cry of dereliction.

In fact a much simpler solution presents itself: that δύναμις here functions as a circumlocution for God.[35] Examples of this usage can be found in Matt 26.64 // Mark 14.62, as well as in the OT Pseudepigrapha,[36] later Jewish literature,[37] and in the church Fathers.[38] Even in the gnostic literature "Power" terminology most often functions as a circumlocution for God rather than a divine power indwelling Jesus.[39] In addition there is some evidence that Aquila's version of Ps 22.2 contained a 'power' circumlocution.[40] It seems likely that GP's report here understands Jesus' saying as circumlocutionary for God.

GP 19b continues: καὶ εἰπὼν ἀνελήφθη

This is another crux. Does this refer to an ascent to heaven from the cross?[41] Or could this term simply mean 'he died'?[42] The difficulty is compounded because in its various forms ἀναλαμβάνω seems to be capable of referring to either death or ascension. In the NT the verb often refers to Jesus' ascension (Mark 16.19; Acts 1.11, 22; 1 Tim 3.16), but in each case it is defined as such by an additional prepositional phrase (e.g. εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν) which indicates this unambiguously (so also Acts 10.16).[43] Both Philo[44] and Hermas[45] use the term in contexts connected with both death and ascension. Of course, the traditions that faithful men ascended into heaven rather than undergo death is a complicating factor.[46] Later evidence provides clear evidence of the meaning 'to die'.[47] During the second century there appears to have been some confusion of terminology (which may be reflected in GP). Justin speaks

of some Christians who were saying that there is no resurrection from the dead, but as soon as they die their souls are taken up (ἀναλαμβάνεσθαι) to heaven (*Dial.* 80.4). Here the term can only mean 'ascension'. The connection between death and the ascension to heaven was too close, according to Justin. Irenaeus refers to heretics who believed in an ascension immediately at death (*Adv. Haer.* V.31.1). This, he says, would involve the untenable view that Jesus 'immediately upon His expiring on the cross, undoubtedly departed on high, leaving His body on the earth.'

It is obvious that ἀνελήφθη had two closely related, but distinguishable, meanings in the second century. It is used of ascending to heaven, and (perhaps originating in a euphemism) of dying.[48] There is much evidence to suggest a mingling of these two meanings in some views of death. In cases where it unambiguously refers to ascension, the context provides a clue, and this is not present in GP. The references in Justin and Irenaeus to confusion on this matter is probably reflected in GP here, but there is no clear indication that it could refer to an ascension (particularly in view of the simple continuation of the narrative beyond this point). In addition, there would be no need for any resurrection narrative at all if the ascension was regarded as having happened directly from the cross. A body-death and resurrection; soul-ascension schema, while it can be read into the text does not arise immediately from it.

6. The Miracles in the Passion Narrative

The shaping of the passion narrative provides clear clues of GP's redactional emphases.[49] There are three things which bear attention: firstly, the darkness; secondly, the veil; thirdly, the earthquake. These are refered to in GP 28 as τὰ μέγιστα σημεῖα, and these events prompt the people to acknowledge the righteousness of Jesus.

GP records that *darkness* covered all Judea from noon (v15). This mention of μεσημβρία ('noon') strengthens an allusion to the OT (cf., Is 59.9,10; Amos 8.9). The sun shone again at the ninth hour (GP 22). In the synoptics the three hours of darkness is recorded in one verse (Matt 27.45 // Mk 15.33 // Lk 23.44). None of the synoptics makes a separate report of the resumption of sunshine as GP does. The effect of this is to enclose the narrative of Jesus' death in darkness. Much of the intervening material also serves to heighten the awareness of darkness (esp v18). In addition the citation of Deut 21.23 in GP 15 is explicitly

concerned with the darkness, and the Jewish concern that his body not remain on the cross after darkness (cf., already in v5).

The other two miracles are encapsulated in this darkness by *inclusio*. The veil is torn in two at the time of Jesus' death (v20), and the earthquake occurs when Jesus' body is lain on the ground (v21); then the notice that the sun shines again follows (v22), and the Jews rejoice (v23, presumably because the law has not been violated). GP formulates the whole account around this 'darkness' idea, which, while in essential agreement with the synoptics, is presented in a much more emphatic light.

The *tearing of the veil* is more explicitly linked with Jesus' death in GP than in the synoptics (GP 20 cf., Matt 27.51//Mk 15.38//Luke 23.45). In Matthew and Mark it follows immediately after the death of Jesus (not so in Luke), but GP adds αὐτοσώρας ('at the same time'), referring specifically to the ἀνελήφθη of v19.[50] GP differs in three ways from the report in Matthew-Mark. Firstly the verb used is different (διαρήσσω cf., σχίζω[51]); secondly τῆς Ἱερουσαλήμ is added to the description of the temple;[52] thirdly 'from top to bottom' is not mentioned.[53]

The *earthquake* is mentioned in GP 21 (cf., only Matt 27.51, 54). In Matthew this follows the tearing of the veil, as part of the same eschatological event; in GP, however, it follows from the laying of the Lord's body onto the earth. GP adds πᾶσα—'all the earth' (perhaps intensifying the effect of the quake), and does not contain the apocalyptic material of Matt 27.51c-53. GP is less specific about the effects of the earthquake than Matthew (who connects the fear of the people to the quake, see Matt 27.54). In GP the fear is both great (φόβος μέγας), and unrelieved; since the confession: 'Truly, this man is the Son of God' comes only after the resurrection (GP 45). Also noteworthy is that the earthquake is the result of the placing of Jesus' body on the earth by those who remove the nails from his hands (v21).[54] Nails are mentioned only in John 20.25 in the NT accounts (cf., Luke 23.39f presupposed), but played a prominent role in anti-docetic polemics in the second century.[55] Their presence shows that GP can only with great difficulty be regarded as docetic.[56] In addition, the nails are removed from the hands τοῦ κυρίου (cf., also v24). This use of 'Lord' provides christological continuity from the pre-death to the post-death period and is incompatible with any interpretation that regards the "power" saying as a watershed for GP's Christology.

7. The Resurrection

GP's resurrection narrative (with its description of the event itself vv36-42) is considerably fuller than the canonical accounts. The author uses several techniques in order to focus attention on the resurrection. Firstly, the extended passage concerning the guards at the tomb (vv28-34) emphasises the precautions taken by the officials (the witnesses, the guards, the great stone, the seven seals, the watch kept) even more than Matt 27.60-66. Secondly, GP draws attention to the number of witnesses:[57] this is prepared for in v34 with the arrival of a crowd from the area to check security, and brought up again in v38 (soldiers, centurion, and elders assisting in the watch) and v47 ('all' of those came to Pilate).[58] Thirdly, attention throughout has been drawn to both the tomb and the 'body of the Lord' (vv3f, 21-24, 51). Finally, the important confession: ἀληθῶς υἱὸς ἦν θεοῦ (v45) is located after the resurrection. These factors suggest that the resurrection rather than the death of Jesus is the supreme christological focus of GP.

The most characteristic overall aspect of GP's presentation is the "apocalyptic" nature of the resurrection report itself (vv35-45).[59] The account begins with μεγάλη φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ (v35), and the guards see ἀνοιχθέντας τοὺς οὐρανούς (v36). Whatever additional significance these may have (and the Christian reader is surely reminded of the baptism of Jesus, and God's affirmation 'You are my Son'), they function here as an introduction to the miraculous events which follow: the descent of two men from heaven, with a great light (v36). These men are identified as νεανίσκοι (v37), a term frequently used for angels in early Christian literature.[60]

Following the descent of the angels the stone rolls itself away from the tomb (v37: ὁ δὲ λίθος ... ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ κυλισθεὶς παρὰ μέρος).[61] The soldiers see the two men enter the tomb, and three men come out from the tomb (vv37-39): two of them supporting (ὑπορθοῦντας) the other. This verb (which is very rare) usually means 'to prop up' or 'support',[62] here, however, the context supports the rendering 'to raise up',[63] as 'the two angels are escorting the third in triumph rather than compensating for his weakness'.[64] The emphasis is on the great height of the Lord (emphasized by the structure and language of v40): ὑπερβαίνουσαν τοὺς οὐρανούς. This raises him far above angelic status, emphasizing symbolically his power and transcendence.[65]

The whole episode is similar to *AscenIsaiah* 3.16f where Jesus comes

from the tomb seated upon the shoulders of Michael and the angel of the Holy Spirit.[66] Wright is obviously correct to emphasise that GP here 'belongs to the realm of early Judaeo-Christian apocalyptic'.[67] Another aspect of this is the allusion to the ministry of Christ 'to those who sleep' (v41); this is obviously related to the tradition of Christ's *Descensus ad inferos*—a well attested feature of second century Christianity.[68]

Another notable aspect of the story is the activity of the cross. First it follows the three men from the tomb (v39), and then it answers the voice from heaven (v42). This personification is also characteristic of a Jewish-Christian apocalyptic milieu.[69] The narrative which follows refers to another opening of the heavens, and the descent of another angel (in preparation for vv50-57 which more closely parallels the canonical appearance narratives). The narrative continues without any obvious climax.

8. Conclusion

Our discussion has shown that GP shares the thought world and vocabulary of a Christianity that has links with Jewish apocalypticism. There are many indications of second (rather than first) century concerns. Thus, the martyr parallels; the ambiguity concerning the death/ascension of Jesus; the vocabulary; the great height of the resurrected Jesus; the descent motif; the speculation on the cross etc. The Christology of GP is shaped in particular by martyrological and apocalyptic motifs. In addition there is a distinct emphasis upon the elevated status of Jesus—the consistent use of κύριος, the restructuring and heightening of the miraculous in the passion narrative; the general emphasis on the resurrection—including the impact of the resurrection on an increased number of witnesses, the speculation, the shifting of the confession.

It seems clear that the document cannot simply be labelled gnostic or docetic. Some aspects of the presentation does allow it to be so represented (by Serapion and later scholars), but this is probably best regarded as indicative of the popular nature of the document. The cumulative evidence for a second century date is strong and adds to the impression that GP is a redaction of the canonical material (perhaps also influenced by oral traditions). As such GP offers a window on the process by which the gospel traditions were re-interpreted through the (not necessarily consistent) framework of a particular second-century

Christian, subject to various influences. These influences might be summed up as: a belief in the deity of Christ,[70] the canonical gospel traditions (however mediated), an emphasis on the miraculous, an apocalyptic world-view, and a measure of literary ability.

NOTES

[1] See Origen, *Comm. Matt* 10.17; Eusebius, *HE.* III.3.2; Jerome, *Illust.* 1; Theodoret, *Haer.* II.2; *Decretum Gelasianum*. These are discussed by J. Denker, *Die theologiegeschichtliche Stellung des Petrusevangeliums: Ein Beitrag zur Frühgeschichte des Doketismus* (Bern & Frankfurt, 1975), 9-30.

[2] The earliest manuscript (POxy XLI.2949) contains only a few lines, but was written around AD 200. It's text is not identical with the longer manuscript from Akhmîm; see D. Lührmann, 'POx 2949: EvPt 3-5 in einer Handschrift des 2./3. Jahrhunderts', *ZNW* 72 (1981) 216-226. Of sixteen recognisable words in POxy 2949, ten are identical with words in the Akhmîm fragment. Of the six which differ, four can be accounted for as synonymous variants.

[3] Plates of the manuscript can be seen in M. A. Lods, & M. U. Bouriant, *Mémoires publiés par les membres de la mission archéologique française au Caire.* (Vol 9; Paris, 1892 & 1893), 219-224. We quote here from E. Klostermann, *Apocrypha I* (KTtpVU 3; Bonn, 1903), 4-8 by verse number alone.

[4] For a bibliography see A. Fuchs, *Das Petrusevangelium* (SNTU B2; Freistadt, 1978). Early support for these positions came from T. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Petrus* (Erlangen & Leipzig, 1893); H. B. Swete, *The Akhmîm Fragment of the Apocryphal Gospel of St Peter, edited with an introduction, notes and indices* (London, 1893).

[5] The consensus was challenged by J. W. McCant, 'The Gospel of Peter: Docetism Reconsidered' *NTS* 30 (1984) 258-273.

[6] Challenges to the consensus have come from Denker, *Stellung*; H. Koester, 'Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels' *HTR* 73 (1980) 105-130; J. D. Crossan, *Four Other Gospels. Shadows on the Contours of Canon* (Minneapolis/Chicago/New York, 1985); id., *The Cross that Spoke: The Origins of the Passion Narrative* (San Francisco, 1988); for responses see J. B. Green, 'The Gospel of Peter: Source for a Pre-Canonical Passion Narrative?' *ZNW* 78 (1987) 293-302 (against Koester); D. F. Wright, '*Four Other Gospels*: Review Article' *Themelios* 12 (1987) 56-60 (against Crossan); and R. E. Brown, 'The Gospel of Peter and Canonical Gospel Priority' *NTS* 33 (1987) 321-343.

[7] For a gnostic milieu see C. Maurer in *New Testament Apocrypha* (ed. E. Hennecke, & W. Schneemelcher; ET ed. by R. McL. Wilson; Philadelphia, 2 vols, 1963 & 1965, henceforth: *NTA*), vol 1.180-182; for a popular docetic milieu see M. G. Mara, *Evangile de Pierre: introduction, texte critique, traduction, commentaire et index* (SC 201; Paris, 1973), 218 and K. L. Schmidt, *Kanonische und apokryphe Evangelien und Apostelsgeschichten* (AThANT 5; Basel, 1944), 48; for Jewish-Christian apocalypticism see J. Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (Vol 1; trans & ed J. A. Baker; London, 1964), 20f; D. F. Wright, 'Apologetic and Apocalyptic: The Miraculous in the Gospel of Peter', *The Miracles of Jesus* (GP6; ed D. Wenham & C. Blomberg; Sheffield, 1986), 416. Denker argues that GP presents an angelomorphic christology which had docetic consequences (*Stellung*, 102ff).

[8] The most important examples (of parallels between GP and material unique to each gospel) are as follows: GP 30 // Matt 27.64 in a context closely related to Matt 27.62-66 a nine word sequence: ἡμέρας, μήποτε ἐλθόντες οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ κλέψωσιν αὐτὸν καὶ ...; GP 53 // Mark 16.3f nine of ten words (as italicised) repeated in identical form: *τίς δὲ ἀποκυλίσει ἡμῖν καὶ τὸν λίθον τὸν τεθέντα ἐπὶ τῆς θύρας τοῦ μνημείου* ...; also, to a lesser degree, GP 5 // Luke 23.54; GP 10, 13, 26 // Luke 23.32, 33, 39; GP 28 // Lk 23.47. GP regularly uses οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (GP 1, 23, 25, 48, 50, 52), extremely common in John (cf. also the dating of the passion, beginning on the day before the feast of unleavened bread GP 6 // John 19.14). Other parallels which could imply allusion to John's account are GP 14 // John 19.31f; GP 21 // John 20.25; GP 24 // John 19.41; GP 48 // John 11.50; GP 60 // John 21.3ff. For further discussion see Swete, *Fragment*, xviii-xx; L. Vaganay, *L'Evangile de Pierre* (Paris, 1930, 2nd ed.), 43-82; Brown, 'Priority'; and F. Neirynck, 'The Apocryphal Gospels and the Gospel of Mark' in *The New Testament in Early Christianity. La réception des écrits néotestamentaires dans le christianisme primitif* (ed J.-M. Sevrin; BETL LXXXVI; Leuven, 1989), 140-157.

[9] McCant, 'Docetism', 267.

[10] It is the Jews (cf., GP 5 'the people' means the Jewish people because it is 'their feast', and it is they who take the Lord in v6) rather than the Roman soldiers (as in Matt 27.27ff & Mark 15.16ff) who administer the various humiliations to Jesus. Other passages which might suggest an anti-Jewish element in GP include v14 (they want Jesus to die in torments), v15 (darkness covered all Judea), v17 (an explicit statement concerning their responsibility), v23 (the Jews rejoiced at his death), v25 (the Jews and Jewish leaders admit their sins).

[11] This is, however, not true of POxy 2949 which lacks τοῦ κυρίου in v3 (Fr 1, *line* 8). This must lead to caution in dealing with the titles in the Akhmîm fragment. κύριος is probably supported in *line* 5 of POxy 2949 (the second occurrence in v3).

[12] This does appear in Matt 27.42; Mark 15.32; John 1.49; 12.13; but it is not as common as 'king of the Jews', which also occurs in the canonical parallels to GP here (Matt 27.11 // Mark 15.2 // Luke 23.3 and Matt 27.37 // Mark 15.26 // Luke 23.38).

[13] *GosNaz.*2; 15a[// Matt 18.21f, but shifted from Peter's question to the narrative]; 16; 24; 28; 32; 34 [these last four medieval], 'Jesus' appears only once (*GosNaz.* 10 // Matt 12.13), and 'Master' once (*GosNaz.* 16). See *NTA*, 1.146-153.

[14] See *GosHeb.* 2, 5, 7(tris) [*NTA*, 1.163-165]; *GosEgypt.* a, c, d, e, f, g, h, i [*NTA* 1.166-169]. This is also characteristic of the Old Syriac Gospels, which tend to use 'our Lord' instead of 'Jesus' or 'he' (particularly syrS). For the use of σωτήρ cf., POxy V. 840 (4th Cent) *lines 12 & 30*; POxy VII.1081 (a fragment of the *Sophia Jesu Christi*) lines 25-27.

[15] E.g., Vaganay, *Pierre*, 236; T. V. Smith, *Petrine Controversies in Early Christianity* (WUNT 2.15; Tübingen, 1985), 42.

[16] McCant, 'Docetism', 261f.

[17] Crossan, *Cross*, 174-180. He also traces this influence in Acts 8.32f; 1 Pet 2.22f; *EpBarn.* 5.2; *OracSyb.* 8.291ff; *OdesSol.* 31.10f.

[18] So Swete, *Fragment*, 25; cf., W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich & F. W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago & London, 1979, 2nd ed.; henceforth: BAGD), 898 who note that ὡς plus a participle can supply the reason for an action.

[19] Vaganay, *Pierre*, 236; 106f; Maurer, *NTA*, 1.184; Wright, 'Apologetic and Apocalyptic', 402.

[20] Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 125 (on Matt 27.27-29): 'the first-born power was not hurt, as if it had not suffered anything (*sicut nec passa est aliquid*)'. Dionysius, *Comm. Luke* 22.42-44: 'Blows, spittings, scourgings, death, and the lifting up in that death, all came upon Him; and when all these things were gone through, he became silent and endured in patience unto the end, as if He suffered nothing (ὥσπερ οὐδὲν πάσχων), or was already dead' (ed. Feltoe, 239).

[21] Josephus, *J. W.* VII.418; *AscenIsaiah* 5.14; 4 Macc 6. In particular the martyrdom of Eleazar (4 Macc 6) is illuminating; we read of Eleazar undergoing various punishments courageously, and he was 'unmoved, as though being tortured in a dream' (6.5). An interesting duality emerges in this passage. Eleazar's body could not endure the agony of the torture (6.7); his face was bathed in sweat and he gasped for breath (6.11). The impression is certainly not given that the torture, the pain, and the punishment was in any way unreal (6.9); but Eleazar endures, unmoved and victorious. Eleazar triumphs over the pain through his courageous spirit (6.11) and devout reason (6.7, 30). See further O. Perler, 'Das vierte Makkabäerbuch, Ignatius von Antiochen und die ältesten Märtyrerberichte' *Rivista de archeologia cristiana* 25 (1949) 47-72; T. Baumeister, *Die Anfänge der Theologie des Martyriums* (MBT 45; Münster, 1980) who traces interest in *die Theologie des Martyriums* back to an apocalyptic milieu (see pp. 13-37).

[22] See further W. M. Swartley, 'The Imitatio Christi in the Ignatian Letters', *VigChr* 27 (1973) 81-103.

[23] See further Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers* (London, 1890), vol 2.1.610-614; L. W. Barnard, 'In Defence of Pseudo-Pionius' Account of Saint Polycarp's Martyrdom' *Kyriakon Festschrift Johannes Quasten* (ed P. Granfield & J. A. Jungman; 2 vols; Münster, 1970, vol I), 194ff. It is notable that *MPol.* 20 contains a reference to Marcianus [regarded by Lightfoot as the composer of the narrative, *AF*, 2.1.624] who was associated with GP (see above, p. 209).

[24] Eusebius, *HE.* V.1.41 (*The Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons*); Eusebius, *HE.* II.23; III.32.2; IV.22.4; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III.18.5.

[25] *MPol.* 2: 'none of them uttered a cry or a groan'; *MPol.* 8; *The Acts of Carpus, Papylus, and Agathonicê* [H. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (OECT; Oxford, 1972), 22-29] 35; Eusebius, *HE.* V.1.51; *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* [Musurillo, *Acts*, 106-131] 20, 21. Further references to 'Schmerzlosigkeit beim Martyrium' can be found in H. Achelis, *Das Christentum in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (2 vols; Leipzig, 1912), vol 2.444f.

[26] W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford, 1965), 13.

[27] G. W. H. Lampe, 'Martyrdom and Inspiration', *Suffering and Martyrdom in the New Testament* (FS G. M. Styler; ed W. Horbury & B. Mc Neill; Cambridge, 1981), 119.

[28] See further M. Pellegrino, 'L'imitation du Christ dans les actes des martyrs' *La Vie spirituelle* xcviii (1958) 38-54; Achelis, *Christentum*, vol 2.361.

[29] This does not require that it was a unified or systematic concept. The evidence rather suggests that it was a popular tradition resulting in a variety of expressions (cf. also Baumeister, *Anfänge*, 307).

[30] Baumeister concluded: "Der Ausgangspunkt für das christliche Verständnis der Ver-

folgung und des Martyriums ist... die Verfolgerungserfahrung Jesu ..." (*Anfänge*, 308).

[31] Against H. W. Surkau, *Martyrien in jüdischer und frühchristlicher Zeit* (FRLANT 54, NF 36; Göttingen, 1938), 103.

[32] E.g. Smith, *Petrine Controversies*, 42.

[33] According to Basilides, Simon of Cyrene took Jesus' place on the cross, and Jesus took on the form of Simon, and stood by laughing at the proceedings: 'For since he was an incorporated power and the Nous of the unborn Father, he was transformed in whatever way he pleased, and in this way he ascended to him who had sent him, laughing at them, since he could not be held and was invisible to all.' (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.24.4 cf., also *ApocPeter*).

[34] According to the Ophites Christ came down from above and descended onto Jesus 'a clean vessel', in a union with Sophia—who had prepared Jesus for their coming (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.30.12). 'When Christ descended on him, then he began to perform acts of power, to heal, and to proclaim the unknown Father' (I.30.13). This angered people and they planned to kill him, while he was being led to his death Christ and Sophia left Jesus, who was not forgotten because Christ sent a certain power down into him (I.30.13) which raised him from the dead.

[35] So McCant, 'Docetism', 263; also Grundmann, *TDNT*, 2.297; G. H. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus Considered in Light of Post-Biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language* (trans DM Kay; Edinburgh, 1902), 200f.

[36] *Pseudo-Philo* 18.10,11 (tris); 20.4; 31.5; 32.8, 10, 13; 61.5, 6; 62.4 (*Fortissimus* = 'Most-Powerful'). *Prayer of Manasseh* 3; cf., also *Tobit* 8.5.

[37] See E. E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (2 vols; trans I. Abrahams; Jerusalem, 1979, 2nd ed.), vol 1.84-86 (for Rabbinic references). Targ Onk. Deut 33.26 and Targ Jer 16.19b are not exact parallels.

[38] Justin, *Dial.* 61.1-3; 88.2; 105.1; 128.2-3; 120.6; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.7.2.

[39] Menander: 'the first Power was unknown to all' (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.23.5); Saturnilus: God is known as 'the supreme power above' (I.24.1). Apelles: Christ 'came down from the power above, that is, from the good, and is his son' (Hippolytus, *Refut.* VII.38.2). Severus also speaks of hosts of powers, and one whom is 'the power above' (Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 45.1. 3 cf., 5). The Ophites also spoke of 'the Power which is above all' (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.30.7). The Naassenes described the word of God as 'the word of the Exposition of the Great Power' (Hippolytus, *Refut.* V.9.5). These descriptions of gnostic thought are confirmed by similar examples from Nag Hammadi Texts. See especially *The Concept of our Great Power* (Codex VI.36-48), and sayings like the following: 'I was sent forth from [the] Power' (VI.13.2, from *Thunder, Perfect Mind*); 'A Great Power and Great Glory has made the world known' (VII.112.8, from *The Teaching of Silvanus*).

[40] According to Eusebius Aquila's version read ἰσχυρέ μου, ἰσχυρέ μου (*Demonstratio* 10.8).

[41] Mara, *Pierre*, 140.

[42] Maurer, *NTA*, 1.185; Crossan, *Cross*, 222f.

[43] Further examples supporting this can be found in 2 Kings 2.11 (LXX); 1 Macc 2.58; Sirach 48.9; 49.14.

[44] *Moses* 2.291: 'when he was already being exalted (ἀναλαμβανόμενος) and stood at the very barrier, ready at a signal to direct his upward flight to heaven (εἰς οὐρανόν)...'. Since

his 'upward flight to heaven' must refer to Moses' ascension, ἀναλαμβανόμενος may refer to his death as the prelude. In Josephus, however, Moses did not die at all but 'went to God' (*Ant.* IV.8.48; cf., also *TestMos.* 10:12 which probably refers to Moses' death).

[45] *Hermas* 1.1.5: the writer's lover speaks to him from heaven: 'I was taken up (ἀνελήμφθην)...' Note the disagreement between BAGD (p 56), who render it here as "death'; and M. Dibelius who would render it "ascension", *Der Hirt des Hermas* (HzNT): Tübingen, 1923), 433.

[46] On the idea of ascension to heaven see, for Enoch: Jubilees 4.23; 1 Enoch 70.1; 87.3; 2 Enoch 67.2; for Elijah: *GkApEzra* 7.6; for Baruch: 2 Baruch 46.7; 48.30; 76.2 cf., 13.3 & 25.1; for Ezra: 4 Ezra 8.20; 14.9, 50; for Zephaniah see Clement, *Strom.* 5.11; cf., also 1 Enoch 93.8 'a certain man'; 4 Ezra 6.26: unnamed heroes. The ascent into heaven before receipt of apocalypic visions is a parallel, but significantly different theme: *ApocAbraham* 15.4, from which he returns in 30.1; *AscenIsaiah.* 6.10-14, cf., his return in 11.34f; *Life of Adam and Eve* 25.3 cf., return in 29.3.

[47] From inscriptions on Christian tombstones: W. R. Ramsay, *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia.* (2 vols; Oxford, 1895, 1897), vol 2.561f, #454; J. Keil & A. von Premerstein, 'Bericht über eine dritte Reise in Lydien und den angrenzenden Gebieten Ioniens', *Denkschriften der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse* (Wien) 57.I (1914) 36, #53; H. Gregoire, 'Du nouveau sur la hiérarchie de la secte Montanist d'après une inscription grecque trouvée près de Philadelphie en Lydie', *Byzantion* 2 (1925), 331.

[48] BAGD suggest a euphemism 'like our "is in heaven"' (p. 56).

[49] Wright, 'Apologetic and Apocalyptic', 402-410.

[50] GP also includes 'torn *in two*' (with Matthew & Mark, but not Luke).

[51] Since both are relatively common it is difficult to discern any significance.

[52] This could reflect either temporal and/or physical distance, or be a part of the anti-Jewish tendency of the document.

[53] Wright's suggestion that the author 'may have envisaged the rending of the curtain as the work not so much of God from heaven (as 'from top to bottom' implies) but of "the Lord" himself on earth' ('Apologetic', 408), strikes me as rather far-fetched.

[54] 'The Jews' are not specified here until v23.

[55] Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 1.2: 'truly nailed up in the flesh' (also ch 2); *EpBarn.* 5.13; Justin, *Apol,* 1.35: the nails are fulfilment of Ps 22.16; *Dial.* 97; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* IV.34.4 (obscure); V.31.2; Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* III.18 (cf., McCant, 'Docetism', 273 #61).

[56] With Vaganay, *Pierre,* 259-266; McCant, 'Docetism', 268.

[57] The assertion that they were witnesses is also prominent (GP 36, 38, 44, 45, 47).

[58] The prominence of the guards in the narrative is notable (GP 28-34, 35, 38, 43-45, 47-49).

[59] Many of the elements of the narrative can be paralleled from the apocalyptic sections of the NT (e.g. ἡ κυριακή (GP 35, 50 cf Rev 1.10); μεγάλη φωνή (GP 35 cf Rev 1.10; 11.11-15; 12.10); 'opening of heaven' (GP 36 cf Rev 4.1; 11.9f; 19.11, also in Ezek 1.1; 2 Baruch 22.1; *TestLevi* 2.6; 5.1; 18.6; *TestJud.* 24.2). See especially, Mara, *Pierre,* 177-179, 182f; Wright, 'Apologetic and Apocalyptic', 410f.

[60] See Mark 16.5; *Hermas,* 2.4.1; 3.1.6ff; cf., G. W. H. Lampe (ed), *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1961), 900.

[61] Cf., Matt 28.2: an angel rolls the stone away; Mark 16.4; Luke 24.2; John 20.1: it is already rolled away.

[62] BAGD, 847; H. G. Liddell, R. Scott & H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1985 reprint incorporating 1940, 9th ed. & 1968 Supplement), 1893.

[63] This meaning is suggested by Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 1453 (referring to Macarius Aegyptius, *Homily*, 16.6 [PG 34.617] ca AD 390).

[64] Wright, 'Apologetic and Apocalyptic', 412. Cf., also Vaganay, *Pierre*, 297f.

[65] Parallels to great height emphasising authority and transcendence include *TestReub.* V.7 (giants); 2 Enoch 1.4 (two angels); 3 Enoch 9.1-5 (Enoch); CD 2.19 (sons of the Watchers); Hermas, *Sim* 8.1.2 (angel); 9.6; 4 Ezra 2.43 (Jesus); and later in Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 30.3; *ActJohn* 90 (transfiguration: Jesus' 'head stretched up to heaven'); see Daniélou, *Theology*, 121; Vaganay, *Pierre*, 300. In Rabbinic thought Adam originally possessed great height (100 cubits: *bHagigah* 12a, cf., *bBabBath.* 75a, *bSanh.* 100a), which was lost because of sin, and would be regained by the Messiah (*bSanh.* 38b; *bHagigah* 12a). A height of 200 cubits was predicted for all men in the Messianic age (*bBabBath.* 75a, *bSanh.* 100a).

[66] Cf., also other passages with Jesus and two others, stemming from the transfiguration tradition in *ApocPet* (Eth: 15; Gk: 6; *NTA*, 2.680); and *TreatRes.* 48.4-12.

[67] Wright, 'Apologetic and Apocalyptic', 412.

[68] The background is apocalyptic Judaism: 1 Enoch 6-10; 1QH 3.16-18; 2 Esdras 2.16, 31. The doctrine is found in characteristically Jewish-Christian writings (as well as later Fathers): *AscenIsaiah.* 9.15f; 10.8; *OdesSol.* 42.10-20 (cf., 17.6-16; 24.5; 31.1); also discussed in Ignatius, *Trall.* 9.1; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* IV.22.1; IV.27.2; V.31.1; Justin, *Dial*, 72; Clement, *Strom.* 6.6.38f is apparently the first to associate the doctrine with 1 Peter 3.19.

[69] For speculation concerning, and personification of, the cross, see: *OracSyb.* 6.26-28: wood of cross praised; *ApocPeter* (Eth) 1: cross precedes Jesus at parousia (also in *EpApost.* 16); Apoc Elijah 3.2: Christ will come 'with the sign of the cross leading him' (derived from Matt 24.30?). See further W. Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend* (trans A. H. Keane; London, 1896), 232-236. For later speculation see *GosNic.* XXVI; *ActAndr.*: cross addressed in praise (*NTA*, 2.418f); *ActJohn* 98f; *GosPhil.* 84.33. The closest parallel to GP is in a fragment of apocryphal material preserved in Coptic, and attributed to Cyril: 'He saw with his eyes a figure of the cross come forth from the tomb of Jesus' [Frag 5.43; F. Robinson, *Coptic Apocryphal Gospels, Translations together with the texts of some of them* (Texts and Studies IV.2; Cambridge, 1896), 185]. Daniélou, *Theology*, 267 also refers to a tradition regarding the ascent of the cross to heaven (*Acts of Pionius* 13; Pseudo-Methodius 14; Chrysostom, *Cruce* 2.4). According to the Gospel of Gamaliel (see *NTA*, 1.508ff) a man is healed through contact with Jesus' grave clothes (VII.22-VIII.14), and a dead man who is placed in Jesus' tomb is raised (VIII.15-XI.5).

[70] Wright sums up this aspect of GP's theology as a presentation of an 'exaggeratedly divine Christ' ('Apologetic and Apocalyptic', 410).

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